

software spot

Get Writing

by Paul Blundin



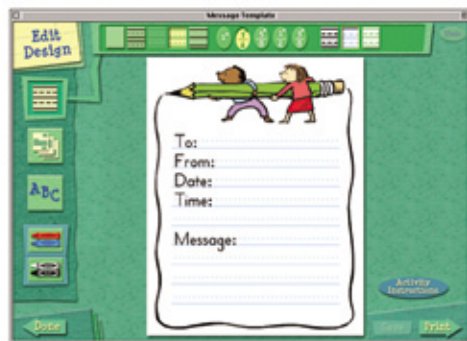
Simple, fun and creative.

If I were to say nothing else about Stationery Studio, I would have said enough! Stationery Studio is a creative tool for making all kinds of writing paper, stories, postcards, minibooks and more!

Do not - repeat - DO NOT confuse Stationery Studio with a program like Print Shop. Stationery Studio fills a need that teachers and students and writers of every stripe have longed for. CUSTOMIZABLE STATIONERY!

Stationery Studio eases the pain of filling a blank page, which every writer knows is the most frightening object in the world. Most importantly, this product ACTUALLY inspires the writer to write. A page of graphics and lines is still a blank page, but somehow, Stationery Studio has an indefinable quality about it that 'speaks' to the writer and invites words to come to mind. If this all sounds too otherworldly, you will understand when you see it in action. Sometimes the best technology transcends its 'tech-i-ness' and touches people on a deeper level.

Stationery Studio eases the pain of filling a blank page



Stationery Studio is developed by sensitive, knowledgeable educators who expertly aim at the elementary grades. As an adult, I found it wonderfully satisfying, freeing and fun to create whimsical looking stationery to use the next time I write a family member. I made a letter festooned with funny monsters and evenly spaced blue lines upon which to write. Since I

could choose the distance between each writing line, I could make the actual letter part long

or short. If I did not want to say much, I could use the visual excuse that I had run out of lines upon which to write! How tricky of me!

All the graphics and even the font/text options have a non-sophisticated, kid-like, light-heartedness about them, so

serious messages might not be best expressed with this program. Rather, you are aiming to make personal letters, book reports, school essays and the like more attractive and interesting to the eye.

Your child gets more benefits using Stationery Studio. School writing projects come across with an big dose of



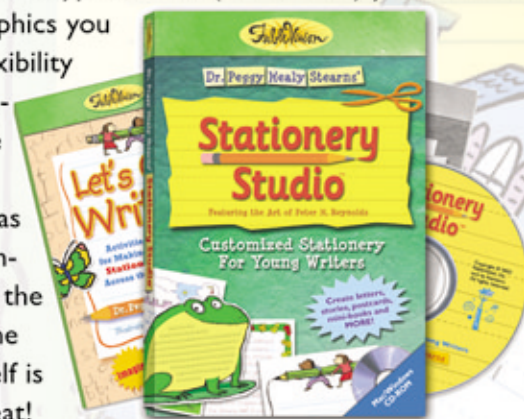
pizzaz if graphics are used in reasonable amounts. The graphics can be related to the subject matter of the written piece and that indicates to the teacher that your child has a better than average grasp of the topic.

Thirdly, making choices about how to best present the written project is a skill that will definitely serve your child well throughout school. Probably, at first, your child will want to load up on graphics, but that phase will run its course and be replaced with wiser decisions like "What kind of lines and how many do I want per page?" "Should I make this a 'shape book' in the shape of an elephant, since my report is about elephants?" "I have to write a business letter, so I better not use the 'friendly letter option' here."

Fourthly, your child will have a mass of fun exploring all the types of stationery available in the program. Options allow for some

latitude in picking how the fonts appear on the page. The early writer can practice tracing individual letters or dictated messages that you type out in dotted fonts. Older kids can connect everything with cursive fonts that give a more sophisticated look. Formatting options can place the text in columns, on the top, the bottom, the left, the right and then hand drawn or computer graphics or pictures from other sources can be pasted in the leftover space.

The quality of the output from Stationery Studio, of course depends on the quality of paper you put into the printer and the type of lines (or no lines) you choose and the graphics you choose. Flexibility and imagination are the keywords here as far as paper is concerned, but the quality of the printing itself is good to great!



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This program is very easy to use. The symbols that appear on your work space are almost always self-explanatory. If you click on a big fat letter icon, you can be sure that your font will increase in size. In fact, I feel this program hits a superb balance between powerful tools and ease of use. **A must have!**

Paul Blundin is a retired computer science teacher with the School District of Philadelphia who helped pioneer the establishment of one of the first computer labs in the area.

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